

## Interview H0215: with Shakabpa, Wangchug Denden [tib. zhwa sgab pa, dbang phyug bde ldan], (India, 1983) : Part No. 7 of 13

*W.D. Shakabpa was a very prominent aristocratic government official who held the rank of Tsipön. He is the author of "Tibet: A Political History." He discusses how the Tibetan Government started giving licenses for private guns and about the problems concerning the Panchen Lama's return to Tibet. The interviewee was one of the Tsipön on the Investigation Committee for the Lhündrub Dzong incident and discusses in detail the interrogation and the whipping of the monks involved. The subject also discusses attending the Tsondu's discussion of the resignation of Reting and how Reting recommended that Taktra serve as Regent. He also tells how Reting came back to Lhasa with the hope of getting the regency back and how Taktra didn't show Reting the normal courtesies so Reting felt that Taktra betrayed him. He also talks about the issue of Reting's celibacy and Delerabten's daughter.*

At that time, it was said that some government guns were missing, so whoever had them, it will not do if you don't report this.

Q

When did they start to give out licenses to own guns in Tibet?

A

I don't know the time, but it was much later. It was not from the Military Headquarters, but from the Foreign Office maybe. I took licenses for all my guns at that time. This order was such that even if your servants are carrying guns without a license, even in the [dzong](#), the guns can be confiscated by the [dzongpön](#), etc. But I'm not sure when exactly the order was issued.

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Q

Wasn't it during the 13th Dalai Lama's period when they had trouble in the Kham area and Kusangtse Dzasa was demoted?

A

No, it was much later. But I don't remember whether it was the Reting or [Taktra](#) period. During the 13th Dalai Lama's time there was a shortage of guns in the Tibetan armory and something like 360 guns were missing. Tsarong and Dakpo Drumba [tib. dwags po bhrum pa] and Gajang Tempa [tib. mgar byang bstan pa] were also among the people taking over the guns from [Lungshar](#) and [Künphel](#). This affair was very clearly mentioned in the Tenteb [tib. rten deb] or the List of Guns in the [Trapchi](#) Office, and I have copied it from there and put it in my book. At that time, Gajang Tempa was demoted because the guns were missing. The licenses were much later, after the 13th, but I'm not sure whether it was during Reting or [Taktra](#).

Q

Can you give me detailed information on the exchanges between the Tibet Government and the Panchen Lama?

A

That I have written in my book in detail. I have no more information than that. I had written the letters the government had sent, etc. I don't remember the words of the letter called dayig [tib. mda' yik). This particular dayig arrived in Lhasa while the Tsondu was having discussions on the Panchen's return to Tibet. It was unfortunate it arrived at such a time, as the Kashag handed it over to the Tsondu while they were debating. It started, "From the Panchen Nangmakhang (in Jyekundo) to the great monastery of [Tashilhunpo](#), all the [dzong](#) and the estates on the way via Lhasa should remember this. So the Assembly felt it was an insult to the Tibetan government by mentioning "via Lhasa." This is supposed to be the capital and it had been totally ignored in this dayik.

In the dayig it was written that all the [dzong](#) and the estates had to make the arrangements for the overnight stays, etc, of the Panchen Lama. They made arrangements for places where 500 horses could be tied in the distance of such and such arm spans away from the camp of the Panchen Lama. And also it mentioned that hay and

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firewood for the Chinese bodyguards should be prepared, etc. There were many things in that dayik.

Q

Do you think it had been purposely sent by the Panchen Lama's office to insult [tib. bkyag bkyag byas] the Tibetan government.

A

I don't know why they sent such a dayig from their point of view. At Lhasa, while the Tsondu was saying that the Chinese bodyguard soldiers would not be allowed to come to Tibet under any circumstances, at such a time the dayik arrived. [Lukhangwa](#) was sitting next to me, I don't remember his rank, but I was a [tsipa](#); maybe he was the acting [kadrung](#). [Lukhangwa](#) started clearing his throat, and clearing his throat, and then started saying a few words, and then he came out and said we should not allow these Chinese soldiers under any circumstances to cross Tibet. There were certain abbots of monasteries who wanted the Panchen to come even with the soldiers, and he started quarreling with them individually. At about that time all the officials started saying no. It was a Tsondu gyepa. I don't remember which one it was. The chief of the Dalai Lama's stable, the pompo chipönla [tib. dpon po chibs dpon lags] was there too.

The chipön stood up and started crying and screaming at the meeting not to let the Panchen Lama and his bodyguards come. Then all the government officials started unanimously saying no. Then the Tsondu decided to make what is called the great oath [This is the strongest document the Tsondu can do and no one can change it. See below]. This is certain, I was there. And it was all caused because of this dayig.

Q

Who was this pompo chipönla?

A

He was the chief of the Dalai Lama's stable in [Norbulinga](#). This was not planned or prepared, it happened spontaneously. While certain people were against allowing the soldiers and others were saying allow it, the Kashag sent the dayig [to the Assembly meeting] and then the situation developed. It was not premeditated. It was said that such

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a dayig was not even sent for a Dalai Lama (in the sense of so detailed and show-offish). Then the Tsondu decided to make the oath and they informed the Kashag.

The next day, before making the great oath, some people again raised objections to the total ban on the Chinese bodyguards entering. Then finally, it was decided that if it was necessary to allow the bodyguards to come to Tibet, then there has to be a time limit of their staying in Tibet for which a foreign country should be the mediator or witness [tib. bar bzhugs].

Q

Thereafter, the Tibetan government indicated to all concerned that the decision was to not allow the Chinese bodyguards to come to Tibet, and when this message reached the Panchen Lama, the Panchen Lama took it very seriously and developed some kind depression [tib. sku rlung] and died.

A

I don't know. But Phabongka went to Jyekundo to meet the Panchen Lama to discuss many things which you might have read in Phabongka's biography too. It is true that he went and talked.

Q

I also heard that Phabongka wrote a lot of letters to his disciples including among these government officials and the abbots of monasteries, etc. Is that true?

A

Maybe.

Q

Weren't there any others who tried to mediate on this issue?

A

This was discussed between the [doji](#) and one of the officials of [Tashilhunpo](#).

Q

Mediators?

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A

No foreign countries were involved.

Q

Among the Tibetans?

A

No. I'm sure no one was there except Phabongka. His actions seemed to be due to the request of Reting Rinpoche. It was not an official visit. I heard Reting Rinpoche told the Doji to request him to go there [Phabongka was in the Kham area at the time]. This was rumored in Lhasa at this time. I don't have anything to tell you officially. In Chamdo there were some [Tashilhunpo](#) officers who had come and talked with the Doji, who then sent a report to Lhasa. Also, the two, [Horji](#) Pemala [tib. pad ma lags] and [Namseling](#), through them some report came to Lhasa. From the Bachen [tib. sbra chen] side, other information came saying that some people from [Tashilhunpo](#) came saying what happened, etc. All this I came to know through the Tsondu because later all these reports were handed over to the Tsondu.

So this is how they took the final decision. Then the Tibetan government sent a telegram to the Chinese government requesting them to withdraw all their bodyguards with the Panchen Lama. One report was also sent to Panchen Lama border district officers and the [depön](#) were instructed through edicts that if Panchen Lama came he should be welcomed and all facilities rendered, but if the Chinese guards come they were not to be allowed at all. The Tsondu had made this decision with the great oath. This particular edict I have put in my book. This is very clear and I have put it in my book. This is very clear and I have nothing more to say. I was in the meeting. I was a [tsipa](#) at that time.

Q

Regarding the timing of the 13th Dalai Lama, once again I'd like to discuss this. In your interview you mentioned that your uncle Trekhang went to see Kujar often.

A

I don't know whether he was going to see Kujar, but he was going to see the Dalai Lama very often. The late [Trekhang] [Sawang](#) was [Tseja](#) at the time. Through sources

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like this I can understand things and I visited [Norbulinga](#) often and could find out what was happening, but I didn't meet him often. However, my other uncle who was a [Trunyichemmo](#) was very close to Kujar and very powerful.

Tseja's house was next to the [Yigtsang](#) Office (in [Norbulinga](#)). The [Trunyichemmo](#) came out of the [Yigtsang](#) office and then took tea in the Tseja's house and then he said, "Oh, oh" and laid down for a while at Tseja's house. And then he said, "Don't tell others." But the condition of the Dalai Lama is very bad." Then I went to Lhasa and quite a while after sunset, the message reached Lhasa of the death of the Dalai Lama and people started running to the [Jokhang](#). I, along with my elder brother and mother, went to the [Tsuglagang](#) to change the melted butter in the golden butter lamp [tib. gser kong brje]. Then the message came to remove banners, etc. and at about the time full darkness came, the drums (tib. dama [brda ma]) started playing from the Potala and [Tsuglagang](#) and then people started crying. As far as I'm concerned, it was between 4-6 P.M. when he died. It was not at night and not early morning. It was about the time of sunset. I went to the [Jokhang](#) and people were already there.

Q

Regarding the Lhündrup Dzong incident I have talked to a number of [Sera Je](#) monks and many of them said that they definitely hit the [dzongpön](#) with a teapot and firepot, but he was not dead [as a result of this]. He only pretended to be dead and later he even came to Lhasa and had treatment for his injuries and recovered. Then they had some kind of picnic and due to a certain food he ate, he died. His body was sent to the cemetery in Parikhug [tib. brag ri khug] [an area between Sera-Drepung] [this is important for if you are killed by a knife you are supposed to be buried not cut up in a sky burial], right?

A

I don't know. As far as I'm concerned, I was one of the investigators and as far as I know, he had been beaten up and a few days later he died. It was not that he had come to Lhasa and had a picnic, etc. I had never heard this. I was concerned with this incident because I was the investigator (so I took interest in this).

Q

In general, it was said that he was hit with a sword or stick. Anyway, he was wounded, right?

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A

Yes.

Q

I asked about 5-6 [Sera Je](#) lamas and monks and they all said the same thing.

A

I don't know what the monks really say about it, but what I heard is what I told you. Ngawang Dragpala, who is popularly known as Lheding [tib. lha lding] [Trunyichemmo](#), and I were appointed as investigators. However, we returned the order and said two people are not enough so please make the investigation team all the 8 Trungtsi.

That day when we were appointed and returned the appointment order asking for it to be made all 8 Trungtsi, it was during the winter. The next day the Kashag (via the Regent) appointed the full 8 Trungtsi. Then the situation turned worse during the [gutor](#) offering in [Tse](#) on the 29th of 12th month. Talk came that the Sera monks will not attend the Mönlam. During that time the Dalai Lama was going to attend the Mönlam on the invitation and sponsorship of [Tshomönling](#) I think. [The Dalai Lama usually doesn't attend without a sponsor]. So the government started sending orders to Sera that they have to attend and we also requested additional investigators. Then we had Khenche Dombo and Theiji [Sambo](#) added. Then it became the joint Theiji and the Khenche [tib. tha'i mkhan sbrel po] plus the 8 Trungtsi.

Among the 8 Trungtsi, we excluded the concerned [Trunyichemmo](#), Chömphe Thubten. At that time they called monks, not only from [Sera Je](#) but also Ngagpa college and the grain steward [tib. 'bru gnyer] to the interrogation, but they didn't come. The representatives of the abbots came, and in their explanations, no such things like the [dzongpön](#) was still alive was mentioned at all. The [Sera Je](#) officials requested that the government not call the involved monks. So this was going to be a big problem.

Q

Didn't you lash Repe Gyau and those monks?

A

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Not on that day. That was after the ringleaders were handed over to the investigators. It was definitely on the 29th of the 12th month that we heard that the monks of [Sera Je](#) and Ngagpa Colleges met and decided to avoid attending the Mönlam Prayer Festival. But since [Tshomönling](#) had invited the Dalai Lama to attend the Mönlam, it became very important and necessary for [all] the monks to attend so the government held meetings and sent edicts and also called the shengo and the simkhang depa and told them that they will consider the entire case after the Mönlam and [Tsongjö](#) festivals, and in the meanwhile, the monks should attend all functions as normal. But they [the monks] didn't come on the 1st day which involves the practice seating of the monks in the [Jokhang](#) for the Mönlam [tib. gral 'dzin]. Normally they all come to get the seats which they will use for the next 21 days. The day after this, however, they did come. [note: [Tshomönling](#) Rinpoche is from [Sera Me](#) college, a competitor of Sera Je].

During the Mönlam we had no trouble and it passed very peacefully. Whether it was immediately after the Mönlam or after the [Tsongjö](#) I don't know, but then the monks were individually arrested and lashed. Among them was the famous Sera monk Repe Gyawu. He talked back to the Investigation Committee very strongly and [Kapshöba](#) even hit him on the head with the Samtra. A member of the investigatory committee hitting him with the [samtra](#) on the head wasn't nice and it was Kapshöba's too great sycophancy [for Taktra] that he did this. Then [Kapshöba](#) ordered them to take those monks down to give them lashes. Then some of the [Trunyichemmo](#) and me suggested that if we could avoid whipping the monks [which was considered terrible because they are monks] it would be better. But [Kapshöba](#) said, "No. look at them [Repe Gyau and the Ngagpa monk]. How arrogantly they're talking saying that even if we have to roll up the assembly mattress [tib. tshogs gdan sgril] we are not going to yield. So they really need a good lashing." Then they told the Bodyguard Regiment soldiers to take them down toward [Sharchenjog](#) and on the way somewhere, these two monks were whipped.

Q

Repe Gyawu wasn't even directly involved in the killing of the Dzongpön, was he?

A

Whether he was concerned or not, he got whipped. And even the Ngagpa monk who said he was not concerned, he also got whipped on the way when they were being taken to [Sharchenjog](#). They were beaten just near where the big drum was hanged. The senior



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Tsipön and [Trunyichemmo](#) walked down to where they were beaten, so we also had to go down. While they are being beating we said, "Oh, that's enough now." By that time, they had received 40-50 very severe lashes. It was a very severe beating.

Q

It must be more because I heard that Repe Gyau had very bad wounds which cut the surface [the flesh out of the buttocks] and he later kept them in a small [bag](#).

A

No, no. I saw it myself. It was not like that. The Ngagpa monk was almost unconscious. Repe Gyau was still very sassy. Those people doing the whipping had come from [Shöl](#) and they did a very severe whipping and their butts had kind of bruises. I felt very bad. Repe Gyau was talking back in a sassy manner but the Ngagpa monk didn't. They also made some lay people who were going to be questioned watch the whipping and they were all shivering by the end of it in fear. I don't remember the date. Later they said they will give a proper explanation with due respect [tib. 'gram pa sa phab]. Then all the monks in Phenpo who were actually involved gradually came. At about that time, the abbot of [Sera Je](#) College ran away.

The Ngagpa college abbot was demoted. After the [Sera Je](#) abbot ran away, then the monks obeyed the government's orders. Thereafter the Investigatory Committee met in [Shöl](#) in the upper part of the Parkhang [where they keep the wood blocks for printing].

Q

I heard that while this was being investigated, they were taken from the back side and locked up in [Sharchenjog](#)?

A

No. Those already in the jail in [Sharchenjog](#) were brought down to [Shöl](#). They had already got beaten and put down.

Q

Repe Gyau was also beaten and put down, right?

A

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Yes. After the abbot fled, they kind of shrunk [tib. bab]. The new monks were brought directly to [Shöl](#). I am not sure who talked as the mediator, but then [Sera Je](#) handed over all its guns to the government. All the guns were brand new mausers and one or two were Chinese made Ushang [ch. wu [xiang](#) and Russian made Ushang which took 5 bullets]. About 100 were brand new mauser rifles. They got these when Reting was the Regent. Reting got the British to sell [Sera Je](#) 100 new rifles. These were all taken over by the Tibetan Military Headquarters and the cost of these was reimbursed to [Sera Je](#) by the Tibetan Military Headquarters to be used for one of their prayer rituals called Sangchö Drumchö [tib. bzang spyod sgrub mchod] as an additional endowment. From Sera Ngagpa, they only got a few terrible old guns, but they also paid money for them as an additional capital for the prayer ritual Sangdü Drumchö [tib. gsang 'dus sgrub mchod]. This was proposed by the Investigation Committee and approved by the Regent.

The final verdict was issued at the [Shöl](#) Office. Repe Gyau was exiled to Hor Drachen. One of the Ngagpa Chandzö was sent to Sangnga Chödzong [tib. gsang sngags chos rdzong] [in South Tibet on the Indian border]. One Phenpo layman was sent to Phari. These I remember. Some Lamas and some Geshees also got whipped. I still remember that one old Geshe who was from Triu [tib. [tre](#) hor] in Kham was never asked to come to the investigation committee for explanations, but he was also whipped. He was old and looked sincere and religious and just before his being whipped he said "Gyawa Tsongkhapa" [tib. rgyal ba tsong kha pa], [the name of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa sect] showing his devotion. This was something which was very touching to everybody and even the whippers didn't whip him hard and just did it as a formality. This also moved me emotionally very much but I could do nothing. That year I went to Nepal. We say that whatever we pray to the Stupa in Nepal the first time, it will be answered, so I prayed that I will not be involved in such investigating committee in the future. However, to the contrary, I came to be on the Investigation Committee for Reting and it was worse than this one was. I even prayed at Bodhgaya for this.

Q

What is the real true reason why Reting had to resign? Some people say he had problems with his vows and he didn't want to give the Dalai Lama his ordination.

A

Later there was such talk.

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Q

What is the true reason? I also heard that monks were talking in the monastery and also stuck up posters that said that it isn't right for Reting to give the vows to the Dalai Lama since he himself doesn't have pure vows?

A

I haven't heard anything about the monks in the monasteries. His resignation was very sudden and I was the [Yigtsang](#) (document keeper of the Tsondu) and I had to attend the Tsondu whenever there was a meeting. I was a [tsipa](#) at that time. So no such talk had ever come at that time. All that talk came later, after his resignation.

The talk that he was not a pure monk and this is why he resigned was being talked about in town. However, whether such talk was authentic or not, I don't want to involve myself by making comments. After the confiscation of Reting's property and the investigation, one letter appeared in his own handwriting that said, "so-and-so has a little child so it will have difficulty with the cold weather, etc., so she should be sent before."

Q

This was Delerabten's [tib. bde legs rab brtan] daughter who was married to Reting's brother, right?.

A

Yes. Later this was revealed in the Tsondu and they became doubtful of his celibacy. This was after the Reting trouble.

Q

Wasn't that woman Delerabten's daughter?

A

Yes.

Q

Wasn't she Reting's sister-in-law?

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A

Yes, it was his sister-in-law and they had a child also, but it was in his own handwriting. When this was revealed the Tsondu became suspicious. Other than that, there was no actual talk at all. Accordingly, in the draft plan of the Reting Affair, they did not mention clearly that he isn't a pure monk, etc., however, I think they had proposed to change the name of the Dalai Lama [his personal name] which was given by Reting and carried half of Reting's own name Jampel [tib. 'jam dpal]. This was changed, and they insisted the Jampel part of the name be withdraw. The Tsondu insisted. Wasn't that changed?

Q

Yes, they changed it. But now the Dalai Lama has insisted to add that name again.

A

Reting took the first strand of his hair [tib. dbu skra gtsugs phud] and then he took the monk's vows [tib. dge tshul] from [Taktra](#). He resigned one year before the Dalai Lama took the monk's vows.

Q

Then the Dalai Lama's personal name was changed and also a new longevity prayer [tib. zhabs brtan] was composed.

A

Oh, most probably no.

Q

In the name given by the Reting it was Jetsun Jampel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe [tib. rje btsun 'jam dpal blo bzang ye shes]. Later, Jampel was withdrawn.

A

Probably, it had not been withdrawn when the Dalai Lama took his monk's vows. The name was changed because of the Reting trouble and also the longevity prayer was changed. That much I have to say. I have nothing else to say.

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Q

How did [Taktra](#) become Regent?

A

It was very interesting. I don't know. It was decided in one day. Reting resigned and [Taktra](#) took over in one day. I was in the Tsondu and the whole Tsondu went to Reting to request him not to resign. The Shö ga was held in the Potala. We held the Tsondu meeting at the Sasum [tib. sa gsum] Hall (in the Potala). When we heard the news of Reting wanting to resign, the abbots expressed their shock so we requested that the Kashag ask Reting not to resign, and the Kashag in turn informed us that Reting Rinpoche wasn't listening to such requests. So all of the Tsondu went to the Shö ga. I was not included inside the room; however I was in the corridor. So the Theiji, Khenche and Trungtsi all went inside. We were left outside, but we could hear something.

So they made the request, but Reting didn't listen at all. And then he told them that he thinks that [Taktra](#) will be the best and most suitable to be the Regent. So then we came back and discussed this in the Tsondu. Then I don't know how that was informed to the Dalai Lama, [perhaps] through the Jigyab Khenpo, but the word came that the Dalai Lama said it would be very good if [Taktra](#) took over. I don't know who told this, and I have no idea about how the Dalai Lama was informed, but such talk definitely came out in the Tsondu discussions.

Then we went to [Taktra](#). It was in the same corridor in the Potala. He was the Dalai Lama's tutor so we went to the Tutor's quarters. It was on the middle floor. This time I was in the room. [Taktra](#) said I am very old and I could not do such a thing and then they said the Dalai Lama thinks it's a good idea and Reting Rinpoche himself has suggested your name. And they also told him that according to the divination and the mirror divination [tib. dpra phab], there is no choice for Reting but to resign. They insisted and he accepted. Everything was done in one day.

A funny thing happened that day. The Chandzö Chemo of [Taktra](#) was running up and down the corridor excited and tried to borrow some tea from the Shö ga. He even tried to serve the tea to the Tsondu [this was very unusual]. Some of the Tsondu members advised him not to do this as it would be not good [it would look as if it were all fixed]. By the time the Tsondu meeting was over, the old Regent had resigned and the new Regent was confirmed. Everything was over.

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Q

Don't you think they internally agreed?

A

I cannot say whether they had internally agreed or not. I have nothing to say. Taktra's name was given by Reting. I don't know who told this to the Dalai Lama, but when we went to [Taktra](#), the Dalai Lama's name again was mentioned as thinking it was good to do this. As far as I am concerned, I was only a listener and when they told me to record some points, I did it. I and Ngawang Thöndrub [Angula] were the two [yigtsag](#). As far as we were concerned we had to keep the documents in tact; to put them in the box and get the seals from the officials and put the seals on the box. And whenever the next meeting was held anywhere, e.g., sometimes in [Tse](#) and sometimes in [Norbulinga](#) and sometimes in the [Tsuglagang](#), we had to show the seals on the box to the officials and open the box and take out the necessary papers and carry it to the Tsondu meeting place. Afterwards we had to put them back in the same way. As far as the writing of the Tsondu documents were concerned, we had to write them. And whenever we could not do them, we had to hire assistants to do them. And whenever they dictated something, we had to write it down. Or if they drafted something on a [samtra](#), we had to copy it out. These were the duties of the two of us.

Q

There was the talk about handing over the regency in three years, right?

A

Reting later told me something. When Reting and the [Taktra](#) didn't get along well it was after 6-7 years and I was a Tsipön already. We had quite close relations with Reting. The previous Reting who faced the misfortunes was born in Ngodrupding [tib. dngos grub lding], which was my mother's family. Therefore we were very close. When Reting Rinpoche came back to Lhasa [a few years later in December 1944] with great pomp and show, you remember? He had consecrated the new temple. He told me to sit down. He never told me to sit down before. Then I sat down. When I sat down he said come closer, so I moved a little closer. It was in the Reting Summer Cottage (Trokhang) in Lhasa and

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Rinpoche himself was sitting on a cushion placed in a wooden frame, [tib. bzhugs sgrom]. Then again he said move closer and I did. Now I was very close to him.

He said, "We are very close to the [Shakabpa](#) family, however, when I was Regent I could not help at all. [indicating sadness]. But [Taktra](#) has been a great help to you and that is very good. But I faced my main gate to the east with the hope of getting good sunshine [tib. rgyal sgo shar la btas nas/nyi ma e dro bsam byung] and I have given the Regency to [Taktra](#) Lama. But the horns that have grown on the head, are now sticking in the eyes. [tib. mgo la skyes pa'i mig la zug byung] [This is a saying in Tibetan that was used when someone did something good to another and the other did something bad back to them.]. He told me this on that day from his own mouth. So how do I interpret that? Instead of help, I got harm. So I don't know how to interpret that.

Immediately, I got up and prostrated to him and told him to please try to keep the teacher and student relationship pure, and whatever complaints you have please make them straight to [Taktra](#) Rinpoche. As far as we are concerned, we cannot influence [tib. shugs rgayg] [Taktra](#) and tell anything to him, but this isn't the same for Reting Labrang. So whatever complaint you have please make it directly to [Taktra](#). This didn't suit Reting's wishes and he didn't like that remark and he started taking snuff. What he really wanted was that I would volunteer to do something. But where is the power I have? I had no power. Don't you think he meant that he discussed this with [Taktra](#) and appointed him?

Q

Reting also talked similarly to many other incarnate Lamas. Don't you think they had some talk before he gave over the power?

A

It shows they had some talk. It definitely indicates they had talks, but I would never dare to tell this to [Taktra](#).

Q

Wasn't [Taktra](#) very taciturn [tib. sgam po]?

A

Yes, he was very taciturn and very strict. So how could I tell him?

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Q

Reting was humorous, right?

A

I knew how to take photographs since the 13th Dalai Lama's time, so we had contact.

Q

Incidentally, while speaking of photos, can we have a photo of [Trimön](#) to be published with your permission?

A

I have a photograph.

Q

Reting had told some Lamas that when he met [Taktra](#) Rinpoche afterwards he would not do even the normal courtesy conversations and showed an unfriendly face [tib. zhal ras nag po]. Is that true?

A

Now it is difficult to know because some people [who know] are dead. Otherwise there was a man called Söpönla who was a monk from the [Shide](#) monastery and Simpönla who was another old servant of [Taktra](#) was also related to him. They both remained with [Taktra](#) all the time. They would know. As far as [Taktra](#) Dzasa is concerned, he was throwing around his weight and trying to act big, which created a lot of trouble later. Now it is difficult to know what really happened there. As far as I'm concerned, we were the people who were working below so there is no way we could know. During that time there was a lot of talk in Lhasa. Some said Reting will take over and become Regent. There was so much talk.

Q

Such talk was even in town?

A



Yes, yes. Even before Reting arrived, while he was only coming to Lhasa, such talk was already going around that he was coming to become Regent again. I went to receive Reting at Möndröl Samba [tib. smon grol zam pa]. All the government officials went to receive him. That time Reting came with great pomp. All his servants had identical beards. All the retinue of Reting like the Sösimchösum, the Söthap [tib. gsol thab] [chef], Singa [tib. gzim 'gag] [monk bodyguards], [nendrön](#), and [shöndrön](#) all had identical beards. [This was very show-offish] Also all of them wore their shawl with the reddish brocade hem [tib. che gru chab stod] called Gyenshi Shimig [tib. rgyan bzhi zhi mog ?] When he departed, all of them wore their shawl with a thick brocade Gyase [tib. rgya se] hem. The day when he arrived it was an event with extraordinary pomp, but when he left it was also with great pomp, but his purpose had not been fulfilled.

I went to [Trapchi](#) to see him off. There he gave me a private audience and told me to come to Reting. [He said] During the period of Khuyug Chöpa [tib. khu byug mchod pa] the weather is good so come then. So I said yes and I'll see you. But there was no time to go and moreover it would have been difficult. [he's been put in a difficult situation]. Then [Taktra](#) Dzasa went up to the place where Reting was staying overnight to see him off. So I thought it was good that now they have some good internal discussions. But I don't know what happened. Whether he came to give a gift or had some message or letter. I don't know. But from then on things went worse and worse. Lhündrup Dzong was the first problem, and this was the second.

Q

I heard Reting could not tell [Taktra](#) that he wants the Regency back, however he spoke very strongly about the Lhündrup Dzong incident and even mentioned that even one's enemies wouldn't do that much [harm].

A

That would be internal talk that I have no way of knowing. You should not go and listen to everyone and you should ask people who you think will not tell lies. Some will tell lies and make up stories and it will be hard to sort things out. Such wild talk has been in Tibet.

Q

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Yes, I agree, but sometimes very shocking things come out. For example, the story that the Lhündrup Dzong head did not die. So I said why didn't you tell the government, and the monks said they could not explain it to the government.

A

How could they not be able to explain it to the government?

Q

When I asked 6-7 Lamas of [Sera Je](#), they told me that he hadn't died and Tragyab [tib. brag rgyab] Rinpoche also said the same. I thought that some may have gone to do the last rites, but they had not. They were sure he had not died.

A

Tragyab Rinpoche is a steady lama.

Q

And the late teacher Lobsang Wangchu [tib. blo bzang dbang phyug] also told me that he hadn't died.

A

Oh my!

Q

Maybe they might have spread talk among the monks that he hadn't die.

A

If he hadn't died, it would be impossible to get punished in that way. During that period, the Trungtsi talked very strongly to the [Trunyichemmo](#) Chömpel Thubten explaining about the Lhündrup Dzong incident.

Q

The monks think it was not only among the [kudrak](#) but also the [Trunyichemmo](#). Since they were colleagues of the [Trunyichemmo](#), they think you all covered this up.

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A

Leave aside the tsipön, the [Trunyichemmo](#) themselves put harder questions than those of the tsipön. For instance, Ngawang Dragpa told him you have a good name and a big name now because people say you are doing very well, but if you follow what others say and insist things here, then it will create lots of problems. You have to know things there really well. [i.e. they not only interrogated the monks but also the Trunyichemmo]. Then Bumthang said, "I swear by the three jewels that I am not meddling in this, whatever they said truly, that's it." I didn't say much, but [Lukhangwa](#) was there, or maybe it was [Kapshöba](#), and he also said you have to be very careful otherwise the name of all the Trungtsi will be dragged in the mud. The decisions of this should be straightforward like we have a saying in Tibetan that an egg should be able to carry a horse [tib. sgo ngas rta 'khyogs]. [if the egg is exactly upright, the egg won't break even if a horse stands on it - i.e. if it is true, nothing can affect the decision]. But I was a junior member and couldn't say much personally, but Ngawang Dragpala said a lot. The Talama didn't say much. [Trunyichemmo](#) Lheding told him that it is your own disgrace.

To this Chömphel Thubten replied after blowing his nose and putting his shawl over his shoulder. "Who made this first? Wasn't it the Tsondu who decided that for the well being of the people that all these old debts should be written off. And if its within ten years then all the interest should be written off. And if it is within five years it should be only light interest. Wasn't it the decision of the Tsondu?" he said. The decision of the Tsondu should be carried out by the [dzong](#), and Lhündrup [dzong](#) happens to be my salary-estate [tib. thab rten] and my brother happened to be there. So it was the Tsondu's decision he replied.

Q

Was the fight in Lhündrup Dzong over this question?

A

Of course. Yes. Because the Tsondu decided to eliminate these debts, the people refused to pay them and monks wanted to collect them and the [dzong](#) supported the people. This is how it happened. But in the Investigation Committee, [Lukhangwa](#) and Lheding [Trunyichemmo](#) questioned Chönphe Thubten very strongly.

Q

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How did it really happen?

A

There were a lot of appeals to the Kashag from the Phenpo, Sey [tib. zas] and [Chushur](#) areas regarding those old debts. Then the Kashag passed these on to the Tsondu and they made the decision and presented it to the Kashag and they approved it and issued orders to all the [dzong](#). The [dzong](#) announced this to the public and then the monks came to collect it and the people refused to pay. Then the monks went to the [dzong](#) and the trouble started like that. That was the root of the trouble. The root cause was the many appeals that came to Kashag over these debts and then the Tsondu's decision. In other areas, I don't know if they had similar troubles, but in Lhündrup Dzong it created major troubles.

Q

I also heard that the monasteries decided not to abide by this decision since it involved a large amount of the income of the monasteries. [i.e. from the interest].

A

No, I never heard that. Moreover, when the Tsondu decided this the monasteries had to put their seal on it [the decision], so that was the end of it. They could not do something separately. If they had problems or complaints they would have to have done it before they put their seal on the Tsondu's decision. They did not do that so probably it wasn't true.

Q

I also heard this situation was done specially by the [Taktra](#) side to irritate Reting Rinpoche.

A

No, no, no. That was definitely not the case.

Q

When [Taktra](#) first took over, it was very good and he even announced that there will be no personal traders doing business for [Taktra](#) Labrang [as had been the case for Reting].

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A

Yes, it was good and it was in his first year that he announced that his Labrang had no traders, and if any people claim to be such, then it should be reported immediately.

Q

I also heard that this had irritated Reting.

A

Yes. I also heard that this irritated both Reting and the [Yabshi](#) because when [Taktra](#) said there was no private trader working for him, indirectly he indicated that there was one before. So in the beginning it was very good. At that time the strongest traders in Tibet were [Panda](#) and [Sandu](#) who were doing the wool business. They also said that it was great that he announced this. This I also heard. But later it had become: "It didn't help the liver and it created tumors in the kidney." [tib. glo ba la ma phan mchin pa'i skran] [this means it didn't help the people but created problems between Reting and Taktra]. It also damaged the collection of Reting and Yabshi's products that they had loaned out. Since Reting had retired and the present Regent was indicating he had nothing of this sort, it naturally damaged Reting Rinpoche's collection of many of the things owed to the Labrang.